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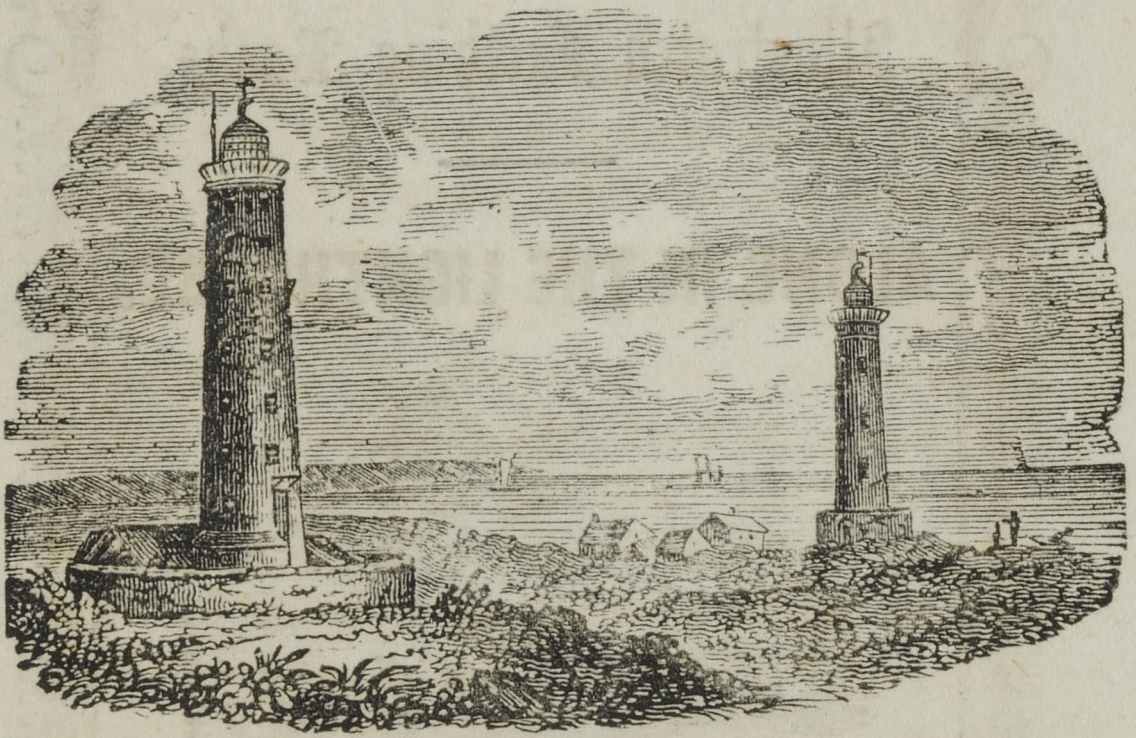
**ALONE IN THE LIGHTHOUSE.**



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## ALONE IN THE LIGHTHOUSE.



A LONG, narrow point of land, washed by the waves of the Atlantic, stretched for some distance into the sea; and but for light which burned brightly from the lighthouse on the point, many a vessel would have gone to pieces on its treacherous shoals. This little strip of land was called "The Neck," and except the stone cottage attached, and fishermen's huts, there was no habitation for many miles.



Two old people had for years been the tenants of the little cottage; and every night they each took their turn in mounting the steep iron ladder of the tower, to trim the lamp, and keep its light from going out. Besides this old couple, there dwelt in the cottage a child of some eight or nine years. Six years before, a ship had gone to pieces on the coast, and of all those who floated ashore, only this child was living; she was clasped in the arms of a dead woman, of whom only a lock of her long fair hair was preserved, in case she should ever be inquired for. She was taken to the lighthouse, and the inmates adopted her as their own. The old man called her "Waif," because there was no one to claim her.

There were many ways in which she helped the old people; she loved to wander along the sea-shore, gathering bright pebbles and beautiful shells. In the afternoon, she would sit with the fishermen's wives, helping them to mend their husbands' nets, and listen to their wild stories of shipwrecks and superstitious fictions with attentive ears.



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The light that shone from the tall tower was a wonderful thing to her, and when she came to understand the danger that it warded off, she looked at its rays with



awe. It was a sacred trust to her, when she was first permitted to clean and trim the lamp; she was even more careful than the old people. The keepers would never allow her to sit up at night; but it so happened that the responsibility of



guarding the light fell upon her herself. The light-keeper and his wife were one day obliged to go to a neighbouring town ; and fearing lest they should detain them till next day, the old man sent for his brother, who promised he would be at the Neck by five o'clock ; and trusting to this, they left the cottage early, leaving Waif in company with two fishermen's wives. As the evening approached, gusts of wind and rain began to beat against the house ; and her companions, uneasy about their husbands, left her, to go to their homes, saying uncle Rollin would surely be with her. She spread the table, and put fresh wood on the fire ; but six came, without Uncle Rollin. When the clock pointed to seven, Waif's heart trembled with anxiety. She had lighted the lamp, but every moment the storm was growing fiercer ; and, after another hour, barred the doors, and went up in the lonely lighthouse, to watch the lamp.

She was naturally courageous ; but when she found herself alone in the solitary place, with the wind whistling around



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her, and the waters surging madly below her, the terrible responsibility almost overcame her. The little hands shook, as they poured fresh oil in the lamps. She looked out, but the sight appalled her; the bright light threw a glare on the water, but she could only see the white foam-caps leaping up below her, and hear the sea dashing against the stone-walls of the tower. At this awful moment, the words of a hymn came into her mind:

“In thy need call to the Lord,  
And gracious aid will He afford.”

Yielding to the impulse, she asked God not to forsake her. All of a sudden, there came a tremendous sea, which swept the lighthouse, shattering the thick panes of glass, and pouring in a stream of water. She trembled, for she felt that now or never she must be faithful to her lamp. And now the leaping spray came rushing in, and she trembled anew as she heard the boom of a gun, a signal from some vessel in distress. She peeped through the window, yet could see nothing but the



black night. For weary hours she watched the lamp, never suffering its light to dim, while her form shivered with the cold, and her garments drenched with spray.

At length the gray morning dawned ; when, lifting up her tired head, she caught a glimpse of a large ship riding at anchor not far from the shore, and with one cry, she sank exhausted to the floor.

A little later, a boat was cutting through the waves. The captain of the ship came to tell the people of the light-house that his passengers were indebted to their faithful care of the light for their deliverance from shipwreck. At first he could gain no admission, but the captain effected an entrance through the window, and still seeing no one, he crept up in the tower, where he found the little girl lying on the wet floor among the broken glass. She was fast asleep, but he lifted her up, and called his companions to look at their preserver. Every heart was touched, and a strange and sudden yearning took possession of one of their number, when he heard the fair-haired child murmur the



words, "In thy need, call upon the Lord." His companions wondered at his emotion, which he explained by telling them that his lost wife used to sing that verse, long ago, when she rocked her infant to sleep. The old people soon returned, and they too wept, when they heard the story of the night in the watch-tower. The stranger asked if she was their grandchild, and the light-keeper told him her story, and showed him the little muslin dress. When he saw this, he cried, "She is mine, my own darling child, Winifred, whom I thought was lost!"

When Winifred awoke, and was told that her courage had saved her own father, she clung to her newly-found parent with eager caressing fondness, while tears of joy and grief rolled down the cheeks of the aged pair, who had loved her so dearly. Her father would not separate her from the old people; together they crossed the broad ocean, to live in a beautiful home, where Winifred still remained the light of the old people, and the crowning joy of her father's heart.